

# THE LUMINOUS WAY

SACRAMENTAL  
LIVING FOR  
YOUNG PEOPLE

FR. DR. K.M. GEORGE



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## Publisher's Note

This book, 'Luminous Way: Sacramental Living for Young People' gives an exhortation for a reversal in our approach to the present world, where people love to boast and crave for popularity.

It encourages our slow and steady movement towards God. Then we are enabled to see clearly everything including ourselves: who we are and where we are heading to? In the little things of daily life, we are reminded to experience the sacramental spirit – the love of God the Creator who made his only begotten Son to become the reconciling sacrifice for the world.

Generally, in the text books of theology we are given theoretical instructions about creation, creator, salvation etc. Here it is some practical guidance to experience in things big and small the sacramental presence of God and make our pilgrimage towards God-likeness.

The author of this book Fr. K M George is one of the well-known theologians of the present time. He continues to occupy important positions in the Christian world both nationally and internationally.

This booklet is Fr. George's testimony of love and commitment to our young people and to the MGOCSM. The MGOCSM registers its heartfelt thanks to Fr. George for this inspiring work.

May God bless the readers to experience a true spiritual awakening.

Fr. Philen P Mathew  
General Secretary

Founded 1908



## Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement

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It is a matter of great joy for me to introduce to the public the book "The Luminous Way : Sacramental Living for Young People" by Rev. Fr. Dr. K.M. George, Director, Sopana Orthodox Academy and former Principal, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. After giving a brief introduction to the sacraments of the Church, Fr. George invites the readers to participate in a team work with the Holy Spirit for experiencing sacramental living. Achen describes how simple and routine activities such as eating and drinking, washing and bathing can be transformed into sacramental acts of contemplation and thanksgiving. Each of these actions can be preceded and followed by appropriate meditative prayers. Some simple model prayers have also been suggested. There is also a strong exhortation to make a habit of blessing the creation: to bless the children we come across, to bless our senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch, to bless the flora and fauna as we walk around, to bless the vehicles that transport us, to bless the buildings we live/ work in. In fact the book asks the readers to bless the whole creation, both living and non living, as we go about in our daily lives.

We are sure that the book will be well-received, and we hope and pray that it will be very valuable to our young people around the world to experience sacramental living in all that they do. This is a book, not merely to be read, but to be practiced, relished and shared. May the book be a source of abundant blessings to all of us.

Kottayam  
Feast of Nativity 2016

Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Coorilos  
President

## Preface

This is a simple booklet that hopes to give some practical guidance for young people and all others who are interested in what is called *Sacramental Living*. It does not give any long theoretical explanation of the Sacraments of the Church, but suggests some exercises and prayers intended for practice in daily life. They have been tested and found useful by many people in their personal spiritual journey.

Please remember that these are only humble suggestions, and not hard and fast rules. Those who wish to follow these guidelines may do the exercises and prayers in any manner that suits them best. It is better to follow the wisdom of our spiritual fathers and mothers, and to go about it step by step slowly and steadily, rather than doing everything at once.

I am grateful to the office bearers of Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement (of India) and my friends at the Sopana Orthodox Academy for their interest in making it available to students and young people on a wider basis.

Father K.M. George  
Christmas 2016



***“And whatever you do,  
whether in word or deed, do it all in the  
name of the Lord Jesus,  
giving thanks to God the Father by him”***

Colossians 3:17

***“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,  
do it for the glory of God”***

I Corinthians 10:37





## A brief introduction to the Sacraments

The Sacraments, or the *Mysteries of the Church* as they are called in the Orthodox Tradition, belong to the heart of our Christian life. From birth to death the life of a Christian is to be ordered and suffused by the experience of the sacraments. They convey to us through ordinary material means God's forgiving love and infinite grace. We respond to these divine gifts through humble thanksgiving and worship. It thus combines the gracious divine gift and the free human response.

In the Syriac language the word *Qudosho* is used for the sacrament. It means 'that which is sanctifying' or 'sanctified'. In Malayalam the word *Koodasha* is used.

The Western Tradition enumerates the Sacraments as seven. The Eastern Tradition also formally enumerates them to be seven, though the number is mainly for the purpose of teaching the

faithful, particularly children. The list of sacraments is, in fact, left open in the Orthodox Tradition.

The formal seven Holy Sacraments are the following: Baptism, Mooron (Myron), Qurbana (Eucharist), Matrimony, Ordination, Confession, Anointing of the Sick.

All Sacraments are centered in the Holy Eucharist or Qurbana and are essentially inter-related. The ultimate goal of sacraments is the salvation of human beings and through human persons all the rest of God's creation.

The salvation of human beings through Jesus Christ consists in sharing in the divine nature and glory by grace. Having been cleansed from all sins, and enlightened by Christ, the Light of the world and transformed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are called to become God-like. In God's love and the grace of forgiveness, we human beings, who are endowed with the gift of the image of God, are called to realize this God-likeness fully in the process of salvation or divinization. Human beings are also given responsibility for all non-human creatures and the whole of God's created world. Salvation of humanity is extended to the transfiguration of this world.

Any visible liturgical act of the Church through its authorized ministers - bishops, priests and deacons - with the sole intention of transforming and saving human beings and the world by the grace of the Triune God can constitute a Sacrament. A Sacrament thus is a concrete expression of the compassionate love and forgiving grace of God to us human beings who believe.

All Christian sacraments have their source in the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Saviour in whom humanity and

divinity are perfectly united. As the eternal Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took our material body for our salvation, all sacraments also have a material medium that our human senses can perceive.

Christ Jesus, by his very incarnate nature, can thus be called the unique Sacrament of God. We human persons, by grace, are called to participate in Christ the Sacrament and become sacramental ourselves because in the union of matter and spirit in us, we are created to be signs of God's salvific love and tender mercy in the world.

When we see a plant or tree, we know that it is a living sign of the combined energy of the sun, the earth, the water and the air. For the health of the plant or the tree all these elements are essential. In the same way when we see a human person we should realize that he or she is the living sign of the energy of the Creator God. St Iranaeus of Lyons said: "A living human being is the glory of God". A human being is not an isolated individual, but a *person* in relationship. A man or woman becomes a person only in the right relationship with fellow humans and with the broader environment and all living beings.

A healthy tree breathes out oxygen for us and all other creatures, bears fruits for us and the birds, provides shade and in numerous ways nourishes all life on earth. A tree, however, has no freedom of movement or creativity. It functions according to its nature and instinct. It is genetically programmed. A human being is endowed with free will, imagination and creativity that can go beyond all genetic determinism. We are called to use these gifts to give joy and hope to the world, to promote life in all its richness. This is the sacramental role of the human beings when we say that

they are the glory of God and fellow workers with the Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus Christ is called "the blessed plant that sprouted in the virginal barrenness of the holy Mother Mary, exuded the pleasant aroma of life to the whole world and dispelled the darkness of evil", (as it is said in the *Thaksa* of the Holy Qurbna). This was the unique sacramental character of Jesus the Tree of Life. So let us stick to this metaphor in understanding our own participatory sacramental role as human persons in this world.



## Sacramental Living

Sacramental living is to experience in our daily life the meaning of Sacraments. Sacraments are meant to be lived out, not simply taught and learnt in theory. What is called 'sacramental spirituality' is a form of Christian living permeated by a spiritual vision of ourselves and our world based on the principles of sacraments.

A theology of Sacraments may be a bit too abstract for ordinary Christians. But sacramental spirituality at the practical level consists in simple exercises and experience in our ordinary life, and is open to all irrespective of our intellectual abilities and our positions and responsibilities in life. As the first disciples of Jesus were not very learned men, but simple folk, so we too can learn from our Teacher and Saviour the Way of Life that leads to the Kingdom of God even if we are not very learned or gifted in the ways of the world.

The most important thing to remember is that the Holy Spirit of God is continuously at work in creation from the very beginning. The Spirit works in us human beings to inspire us for all good deeds and enable us to recognize the will of God in our lives. As the Eucharistic liturgical text (*Thaksa*) puts it, "The one Holy Spirit who brings to perfection all that is and is to be" can enlighten us in our knowledge of the mystery of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The past, present and future of our history

is pervaded by the Holy Spirit. We only need to listen to the soft whisperings of the Spirit who respects our freedom.

Sacramental living is essentially inspired by the Holy Spirit to follow Christ and do God's will in our life. It is not to be taken as a stressful effort on our part, but a trustful abandoning of ourselves to the wise guidance and wisdom of the Spirit of God in faith, hope and love.

## Team Work with the Holy Spirit

We humbly cooperate with the Holy Spirit by doing certain simple exercises at the beginning to attune ourselves to the music of the Spirit.

It is a bit like our breathing. Whether we are conscious or not we breathe every moment of our life from birth to death. But if we learn how to regulate our breath in the right way, it can produce some very beneficial effects in our physical and spiritual health. An ordinary biological breathing can become a spiritual or sacramental breathing. It changes a lot in our relationship with God, with others and with the world around us. We get a new sense of orientation, and a new awareness of ourselves. Here again we do not depend completely on our conscious effort, but on the gracious love and forgiving compassion of God. We are the children of God, and we use that freedom and privilege to enjoy the presence of our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Saviour by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Some Examples

The following are some examples. The reader may find his or her own method of exercises and meditation. These meditative exercises may require some quiet and undisturbed environment

at the beginning. One may have to begin to do it alone if possible. One has to train oneself to a new sense of beauty at the beginning.

## Food and Eating

Eating and drinking can be highly sacramental if we give some moments of attention every time we do that.

**First** of all, take a look at the food placed before you, the beautiful way it is laid out. Even if it is a simple bowl of rice, the shape and order of the very grains can reveal much to you. Do not look greedily for a variety of curries. Stay with what is there. Rejoice meditatively in the beautiful pattern and colours.

**Second**, remember that it is the gracious gift of God. The earth and the sun, the air and the water, many hands of men and women, billions of bacteria all have worked together to produce a bowl of rice for you.

In your heart, say thanks to God the Creator and to all those who have worked behind it from the micro organisms to the person(s) who cooked it.

If you cook it yourself you can still do the thankful meditation in the process of preparation like cutting vegetables etc. Pray for all those who are going to eat from what you cook.

**Third**, be attentive to those who eat with you. Take care of their needs at the table even if you sit with total strangers in a restaurant. If you, happen to eat alone, remain silently for some moments. Remember all those who are deprived of food in our world due to poverty, ill health or other reasons. In many places in India traditionally we had the practice of women keeping apart a few pinches of rice (*pidiyari*) whenever they took rice to cook for

their family. When these small portions were gathered up at the end of a few months, it made a substantial quantity for distribution to the needy or for sale to assist some charity projects. This was a traditional form of sharing our essential resources like rice with those in need. Today when the scarcity of rice is not probably experienced by many people we may practise sharing of God's gifts in other ways.

**Fourth**, do not complain about food while you eat. If you have suggestions or corrections you may do it later in a gentle way. Food is sacred and eating is holy. We should not abuse people or indulge in bitter complaints during this holy act.

**Fifth**, do not be gluttonous. Eat to your satisfaction, but do not overeat or waste the food. This is advisable not only for personal health reasons, but for the holy cause of rising above the animal instinct and make your eating sacramentally spiritual. Our world is desperately short of resources and energy. As Mahatma Gandhi used to say, "We have enough on earth for everybody's need, but not for everybody's greed". When you are thankfully mindful of your eating you will be moderate in consuming food, and will enjoy it. You will then be rewarded by inner joy, better health and relationships.

**Sixth**, never eat without blessing your food or drink. Remember Jesus fed the hungry out of meager resources, and he used ordinary food and drink to institute the Holy Eucharist. He always took the bread, looked up to heaven, blessed, broke it and gave it to others. This is our model. Even if you are



not able to pray the traditional prayer  
before meals, you may silently bless  
the food that you are going to eat in  
all thankfulness to God and to those who  
prepare it for you in some way.

**Seventh**, refrain from eating certain types of  
food during the Lenten season.

The Church, our spiritual mother,  
has wisely arranged the fasting seasons  
for our physical and spiritual health.  
During the fasting period  
we become generally vegetarian.  
Remember that our intellectual  
or other mental abilities are not  
affected by renouncing meat  
or animal products. In fact,  
some of the most intelligent and gifted of human  
beings in history depend on very simple food. Balanced fasting  
and periodic abstinence from certain types of food along with  
genuine prayer, forgiveness and compassionate love can generate  
true spiritual joy and well-being. In the experience of many,  
sharpness of mind and memory can be heightened by fasting or  
controlled eating.

Eating a simple meal or sharing it in all gratitude, humility, joy  
and love can be an extension of the Holy Eucharistic meal in its  
broad sacramental and spiritual meaning.

If you can consciously do the sacramental eating exercise for two  
weeks, you will be able to do this subconsciously without any  
effort on your part.

## Prayer before the Meal

*Lord, bless this food and drink you have graciously given to us for our nourishment. Help us remember your merciful gifts and praise your holy name forever, Amen.*

## Prayer after the Meal

*God our Lord, We praise you for your grace and blessings. We thank you for your tender mercies for nourishing us to satisfaction. Help us to praise you and do your will forever – Amen.*

## Water and Bathing

Water is an essential element for all life on earth. In almost all traditional cultures in the world, one of the first things one does as one gets up is to wash one's mouth and face with water. Our day begins by touching water. Life on earth began with the touch of water. Both modern science and ancient scriptures tell us that life emerged from water and no living being can live without water.

**First**, when you touch water in the morning remember that water is life. Our earth is habitable because there is water in liquid form is available to us. Scientists who look for extra-terrestrial life, that is, life beyond our earth in other planets, search for signs of liquid water as it is essential for life.

We can remember in a split second the biblical story of creation emerging from water by the power of the Spirit of God. Remember Jesus was baptized in the water of the river Jordan and the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of dove. He made holy all water and all sources of water on the earth, as our prayers say on the Feast of Epiphany (*Denha*). Remember that you were baptized in water in the name of the Holy Trinity. Learn to thank

the Creator God for “my sister water” as Francis of Assisi said in his Canticle of Creation.

**Second**, remember all animals, birds and plants sustained by water. Pray for all those who are deprived of fresh water to drink. Again thank God for the life-giving and healing power of water. Read the Genesis passage about the four rivers that flow from Paradise to the four directions of earth.

**Third**, make it a point to watch meditatively little natural streams, fountains and brooks wherever possible and praise God for the beauty and transparency of the crystal clear water. Watch with delight and hope the showers of rain as they bring promises to the earth.

**Fourth**, be aware yourself and create awareness on others about the climate change, shortage of drinking water, polluting of rivers and other water bodies, desertification of earth and the importance of wet lands.

**Fifth**, whenever you drink water, say thanks in your heart to God and God's creation, the sea and earth for generating this vital drink for you. If we happen to live the life of an ordinary person in a place where good drinking water is in short supply and the temperature rises to 45° C and above we tend to be extremely grateful for even a little glass of water offered to us. At that point we realize the sacramental value of water.

**Sixth**, when you take a bath, remember that it can be a spiritual extension of the baptism you have received. Baptism means washing and it was meant to give you new life. The sacramental baptism symbolically is participation in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus (Romans 6:4). Immersing in water is dying, rising from water rising up from death. All clothing is removed while a child is baptized and the child is given new clothes as a symbol of the new humanity inaugurated in Jesus Christ. It is putting on the "garment of incorruption". It is also enlightenment. You enter the domain of light, that is, the True, the Good and the Beautiful. You have left behind the old humanity with all its deceit and fear, its hatred and jealousy, lust and despair.

**Seventh**: So when we wash the body with clean water, we may do it meditatively with a prayer to God to clean not only the outside of the body, but also our mind and heart. A bath taken in this spiritual sense can give us the continuing freshness of the baptismal washing that most of us may not consciously remember.

*Prayer -: Wash me O Lord in my body, mind and soul  
so that all stains of evil are removed from me, and that  
I may be illumined by your radiance. Create in me a  
clean heart and habits of virtue that I may become a new  
person and share in your glory and life eternal.*

(Remember that in our traditional prayer books there are prayers to be said when we apply oil on our body before bath, and when we wipe our body after bath.

There are believers who actually use these prayers.

It shows how the sacramental living we indicated above is not anything new, but is part of the practice of Christians from ancient times.)

## More Examples

We have indicated some guidelines for the sacramental use of food and water, as they are vital and essential for our life. On this model, we can translate practically any act, any gesture or movement of our body into a sacramental experience.

Let us take briefly a few examples:

### Pray while putting on Fresh Clothes

There are traditional prayers for the changing of clothes. According to these prayers our soiled clothes symbolize the sinful, old humanity. When we change them for fresh clothes, we put on the garment of incorruption and new humanity in Christ. As we know in our daily experience when we put on fresh dress we feel more self-confident and happy. If our dress is dirty and too old we feel a certain degree of shame and diffidence. Then we try to avoid society, and hide ourselves from respectable company. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God as they felt shame after the fall. So in the Orthodox baptism symbolically the child's normal clothing is removed before baptism, and is given new white dress after baptism. We may silently pray while we change:

*Lord, remove from me the old clothing of sin and darkness and put on me the garment of life and light so that I may rejoice in the feast of your Kingdom with all the children of light.*

### Bless the Children

If you happen to see a child in any place, bless the child in your heart. Who knows what that child might become. Pray that the child grow in the health of body, mind and soul, in wisdom and grace like Jesus. At present it may be a poor child, malnourished or uncared for, or a sick child on the shoulder of his/her mother,

but the future is unpredictable. We need great leaders and wise guides for the world. So pray for the child or the children you happen to see wherever you go. Remember how Jesus welcomed children, embraced them, took them to his bosom, and pointed to them as signals of the kingdom of God. He was showering divine tenderness on the budding life that is to grow into full blossom and to life eternal.

### **Bless the Buds**

In the same spirit, take care to bless budding flowers and plants, young ones of animals and birds. By extending your blessing not only to human children but to the buds, flowers and saplings of plants and to the young ones of birds, animals and fish all around in nature you are blessing the whole of God's creation. Human beings can never be isolated from this wider context of life. They cannot survive without the rest of creation. They are all integrally woven together by the Creator in an amazingly beautiful network of life. Watching the growing edge of plants and trees, and the buds that blossom gives us enormous positive energy. Bless them and be blessed by them. Bow in silence to this great mystery of life in all humility and you will receive blessings from God.

### **Bless the Vehicles of Transportation**

As you enter a bus, car, train, boat or plane bless it silently with a prayer of the heart for all its passengers and crew. When you get out of a vehicle again, bless it that it may safely carry many more people. When you happen to see an aircraft in flight pray from the ground for all its passengers and crew. You may also use your right thumb to mark the sign of the cross on the body of the vehicles while entering and exiting.

## Bless the Ground

In the morning as you get out of your bed and touch your feet on the floor, praise the Lord in your heart. Rejoice in the day's first touch of your feet on the ground. Thank the Lord of life who enabled you to rise and stand on your feet on earth. Bless the earth, for she, as an all-bearing and compassionate mother, sustains us. The ground on which we stand and walk is made holy by our blessing and virtuous conduct.

## Bless the Door

While closing the door of your room or house for the night pray like this:

*Lord, as I close this door  
for the night,  
open to me the door of your mercy  
and protection.*

As you open the door of your room or house in the morning, pray like this:

*Lord of my life, as I open this door, do not shut the  
door of your compassion on me, but open to me  
the path of life that I may walk today in  
your light and joy, in peace and humility  
with all others.*

## Bless the Light

As you turn the light on in the morning.

*Jesus, light of the world, give me the light of your wisdom and  
beauty, and help me to show your light to all today.*

## Bless the Darkness

As you turn the light off for the night.

*Lord, be my light that I may rest in you.*

*May the seeds of love  
and forgiveness sprout in my heart  
in the darkness of night.*

## Bless the Four Directions of the World

You may get up early in the morning.

Open your front door with the prayer,  
stand out on the veranda or steps as weather and place permit.

*Turn to the East.* Bring to mind those who live in the immediate vicinity in the East. Extend your mind to all countries in the East. Pray for them and bless all who live there.

Likewise, *turn to the West, to the North and to the South* in that order. Say a blessing in your heart:

*Lord of all creation; bless all those who live in the four directions of the world. May your light fall on them bringing life, healing and joy.*

Then look up and bless the stars and all galaxies, those persons travelling in the air or living in space stations or exploring outer space. Imagine the immensity of the unbounded universe. Praise the Lord.

Then look down to the ground, to the mother earth and all her bounty, and pray like this:

*Lord of the universe; help me to wonder at the magnificence and mystery of your creation. Help me join the cosmic worship with the*



*sun and the moon, the stars, the planets, the mountains and the oceans and all creatures that live there.*

Then turn your attention to yourself.

*Lord, how small and insignificant I am in this amazing universe. Yet you look at me with tender love. You have created me wonderfully in your own image and likeness. Help me to remain in your grace and grow in your likeness and share your glory with all your children.*

## **Bless the Steps**

As you climb up or down steps of a staircase you may make a meditative prayer for each step. *Jesus prayer* may be short and best for such step-meditation.

*Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me or simply Lord have mercy.*

Repeat this silently and at every step.

**Bless the House** that you visit as you press the calling bell. Say in your heart a blessing on the persons whom you are going to meet in the house:

*Lord, may my coming here be a blessing for those who live here. Grant them protection and a peaceful life.*

## **Make the Sign of the Cross**

The Cross has become the symbol par excellence of love, sacrifice, forgiveness, reconciliation, protection and salvation. Making the sign of the cross is an ancient and most precious gesture of Christians both in their public liturgy, personal prayer and on many occasion in daily life.

We hold tightly together the first 3 fingers of the right hand, symbolizing the holy Trinity and also the union of divine and

human natures in the one incarnate Christ. Take it to the forehead, then down to the chest, then to the left shoulder and finally to the right shoulder. The traditional interpretation is that this gesture symbolizes the descent of the Second Person of the Trinity from heaven to earth in order to save us who were once children of the left to be the children of the right.

In the public liturgy the priest makes the sign of the cross on the congregation. In a receptive mode the faithful make the sign on their own bodies. In the daily prayers there are numerous occasions when we make the sign of the cross.

The priest blesses people, houses, things, vehicles and almost everything making the sign of the cross with the thumb of the right hand. Although only priests are allowed to do it publicly on formal liturgical blessing, believers can do it personally and discreetly on anybody or anything in the same way as they make the sign of the cross on their own body. It is a blessing and a prayer for protection and healing in the name of the Triune God.

## Sacramental Exercise of Our Senses

### Sight

When you see a delightful landscape or objects in nature or a healthy and beautiful person, praise God who has lavished his kindness on natural objects and human beings. In fact, everything from a lofty star to a blade of grass is beautiful if we recognize the value of each in the sight of God. There is nothing ugly in God's creation. Everything created carries the indelible stamp of God's love and will.

*Prayer: Lord, creator of beauty, I thank you for the delight you have granted me through my eye-sight. May I rejoice in your light and the beauty of all that you have created.*

### Hearing

Hearing like sight can be at various levels. Some we may hear, but not listen. To be able to listen to the rhythm of the universe is a great gift. Let us begin by listening to the still small sound of various small creatures, to the sighs and sobbing of human beings in pain, to the melody of the hymns of praises. Listening to the Word of God in creation is the ultimate in hearing. Let us prepare the ears carefully so that we can be attentive to the discrete pulses of God's creation.

*Lord, open my ears to the soothing silence of nature and to the joyous sound of birds and all creatures. May your Word transform my hearing.*

### Smell

The faculty of smell is very powerful in certain animals like dogs and elephants. Smell in the biblical tradition is associated with the

fragrance of spices. Good smell is indicative of life, while rotten smell suggests death.

Most flowers and leaves of many trees and plants have a sweet smell. Incense of various kinds are used in worship in order to produce pleasant fragrance.

When you smell a flower, thank God for the delight of smell and marvel at the large varieties of good smell given to us.

*Lord, I thank you for the gift of fragrant flowers, fruits, leaves and spices. May I rejoice in the sweet-smell of your life-giving love.*

## Taste

Taste is associated with food. We normally eat that which is palatable. Taste is relative to hunger. If we are hungry, any food is tasty. One's sense of Taste can be misused to insult or hurt those who prepare food for you and thus deprive the gift of food of its sacramental character. Therefore taste has to be disciplined. So we fast, avoiding too much indulgence in food and keeping tastes at moderate levels. If we eat a delicious mango or any fruit we should be able to relish it with thanksgiving. Every fruit has its own taste. So an enormous variety of natural fruity flavors are available to us in nature. Giving thanks to God while relishing can make it sacramental. The Psalmist says: *Taste and know that God is good.*

It is interesting to watch how professional wine tasters and tea tasters taste and judge wine or tea. They look at it, observe its colors and the play of light on them, they smell it and finally taste it before judging its quality.

A wine taster tastes an extremely small quantity of wine. If he takes too much,

soon his power of judgment and discernment will be lost. So is with us. Tasting and eating food must be in moderation so that we can live a healthy life and praise God for the taste of food.

Prayer:

*Lord God, you have endowed us with the power of taste so that we may relish your grace and bounty in creation. Make us worthy of tasting your goodness and not to indulge in sinful taste and abuse your holy creation*

## Touch

When you shake hands with anybody bless that person in your heart. Touch is the primary sense experience for a new born child, touch of the mother's body which was child's own body for the first 9 months or so. All of us are one body if we run in reverse the chart of evolution. So when you touch another person you can deeply feel *one body-ness* with that person. Rejoice in this communion as you shake hands. Pray for that person in your heart. Touch also brings healing because it restores lost unity and overcomes fragmentation and division. So exercise this touch in all respect and love for the other person so that it becomes a holy touch, a sacramental act. You may pray:

*Lord of body, mind and soul, unite me to my brother/sister in the loving communion of your living body. May my touch bring healing and hope to both of us.*

## Reading and Study

Traditionally even text books are considered holy in India. Children are taught not to trample them underfoot carelessly. The letters of the alphabet are also thought to be sacred since they can reveal to us the true wisdom if we use them in the proper way. The

first letter of the alphabet, for example, stands for the Creator God who is the source of all creation in the Saivite tradition. The Bible echoes the words of the Lord: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last" (Revelation 22:13 referring to the Greek alphabet).

When you open your book, computer, tablet or mobile phone *make a discreet sign of the cross on it*, and pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit. Pray like this:

*Holy Spirit of God, illumine my mind  
and heart that I may grow in true  
knowledge and wisdom like the child Jesus.  
Surround me with your love so that I may  
use this instrument only for the glory of God  
and for the good of others.*

### Pray for Parents, Siblings and Friends

Always remember your parents in your daily prayer.

They have brought you up with great love and often through a lot of pain and suffering. Bless them in your heart, and be polite and compassionate to them even if they do not always appear to be right to you or able to fulfill all your wishes.

In your relationship with friends, be always reliable and trustworthy. Do not cheat, exploit or misguide your friends. Always be a beacon of light and compassion for them. Friendship is one of the greatest gifts of God, and we need to cultivate it with great care. Always keep your inner spiritual strength so that you will never yield to peer pressure towards any unethical or immoral act. They will finally respect and love you if you stand firm in your Christian principles.

Always remember in your prayers anybody whom you have hurt in mind or body, or anybody who seems to think ill of you for no obvious reason. Pray for forgiveness and reconciliation. If you do this sincerely you will certainly get positive results sooner or later.

True respect for the other is the secret of good relationship. Whether it is with your own siblings – brothers and sisters, or with your friends of the opposite sex, or between husband and wife. A friendship cannot be simply taken for granted. Even an intimate friendship needs to be constantly nurtured with genuine mutual respect. True love looks for the highest good of the other. It does not seek to fulfill one's selfish desires.

## Conclusion

Many young people like to have some soft background music while they seriously study or work. In the same way, silent and continuous prayer of gratitude and praise to God, as well as compassionate love and care for our fellow beings can form the background melody for all that we do or say. This is sacramental living in short. This leads us gradually to grow into more and more God-likeness



# THE LUMINOUS WAY

## SACRAMENTAL LIVING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

This is a modest booklet that hopes to give some practical guidance for young people and others who are interested in what is called *Sacramental Living*. It does not give any long theoretical explanation of the Sacraments of the Church, but suggests some exercises and prayers intended for practice in daily life. They have been tested and found useful by many people in their personal spiritual journey.

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